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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses itself to the question, "What does feeling have to do with knowing?" Two movements in affective education are discussed which have come into focus in recent years and which attempt to define the relationship between knowing and feeling. The first, a conscious application of the role of arousal in learning, emphasizes arousal in learning as a basic ingredient in memory, implying, and creating. In this movement, classroom settings are created where the teacher encourages student participation instead of spectatorship, talks with respect to students, and employs both practical anecdotes and abstract concepts in teaching. The second movement constitutes a variety of explorations in arousal and has elicited the greatest amount of public criticism. This movement attempts to bring people into direct contact with their emotions through sensitivity training, encountering, transactional analysis, and self-awareness sessions. It is suggested that all teachers examine these movements carefully and determine the assumptions concerning human nature on which they are operating in the classroom. (CS)

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AFFECTIVE LEARNING

Charles T. Brown

If a statement is clear, and even worse, interesting it is obviously unfit for the intellectual world. In academe language may be obscene; but it must be abstract, obscure, and subtly garbled. I have long suspected we talk in riddles in order to protect ourselves from the unnerving experience of confronting our appalling ignorance.

Despite the threat let us be honest. This paper discusses an important topic about which we know little, as reflected by the language we must use. The word, "affective" points to the emotional, the feeling side, the stirred-up state of experience or aroused experience as contrasted to the experience of simply being aware. If one is not aware of his experience, he cannot very well explore that experience. Thus awareness is the sine quo non. The question before us is: What does feeling have to do with knowing?

This program is titled "New Movements in Education" which implies that Affective Education is a new movement. I understand, for the lifting out and examining of the aroused side of learning is in fact a feature of education that belongs to the human potentials movements of the last thirty years. However, every good teacher since the dawn of the human specie, I suspect, has aroused his students to be strongly attracted to the data

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under examination -- for if the student does not care he is not likely to put forth the effort needed to become aware. Even if he does, he will not remember for long. Intense arousal is the basic ingredient of long term memory.[1] Of course memorization is not in itself the end purpose of education. We would like the student to see the implications, to think about the data. Again, we find that this involves arousal, the excitation of adrenalin and noradrenalin.[2] And the greatest of all learning, the creative act of synthesizing data in a new perceptual form, is at inception an affective experience. Einstein said that when a new view of the universe came to him, it began with kinesthetic imaging. It is as if he fell in love with the universe, or as if he became so empathetically responsive to the universe that he felt it within him.[3] He said his destiny to explore the nature of the universe began as a boy while recuperating from an illness. To entertain him, somebody gave him a compass to play with. He became totally absorbed, noting that no matter how he turned it, the needle always pointed

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[1]E. L. Walker and R. D. Tarte, "Memory Storage as a Function of Arousal and Time with Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Lists", Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior (1963), 113-19; Gerald Blum, et al "Cognitive Arousal: The Evolution of a Model", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 5 (1967), 138-51; J. Kleinsmith and S. Kaplan," Paired-Associate Learning as a Function of Arousal and Interpolated Interval", Journal of Experimental Psychology, 65 (1963), 190-93.

[2]John E. Lacey, "Somatic Response Patterning and Stress: Some Revisions of Activation Theory", Psychological Stress, ed. Mortimer, Appley and Richard Trumbull New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1967, pp. 14-18; Sanford I. Cohen, "Central Nervous System Functioning in Altered Sensory Environments", Ibid, pp. 77-112.

[3]P. A. Schlipp, Albert Einstein: Philosopher - Scientist, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959.

in the same direction. He said he trembled with excitement. If he could understand why this needle always behaved as it did, he would understand the basic laws of the universe. For more than half a century, beginning with his study of the photoelectric effect, through his triumphs in evolving the special and general theories of relativity, to his final efforts to establish a field theory he was motivated by the childhood experience of trembling in imagination as he marvelled at the behavior of the compass needle.

In a study of some 300 creative lives, Edith Cobb came to the conclusion that the basic source of creative power emerged from childhood experiences of losing oneself in an awareness that shakes the person so that in effect he is destined to be guided by the experience.[1] Affective education refers to the arousal of experience. It is basic to memory, implying and creating.

The recent study of affective education has taken two roads. One is the road I have already alluded to, and to which I shall return. The second road is the freeway with signs along the side at exits reading: the Sea of Sensitivity, to the Land of Encounter, the Valley of the Hidden Agenda, to Mount Value (Clarification County), to the Country of Self Fulfillment. These two roads I allude to are some distance apart but they go in the same general direction with trails and unimproved roads joining them.

In effect, I am saying, there are two overall movements in affective education, which have come into focus in recent years. The one is a study of a conscious application of the role of arousal to learning; the other constitutes a variety of explorations in arousal.

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[1]Edith Cobb, "The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood." Daedalus, LXXXVIII, 1959, 573-48.

The former, in recognition of the power of arousal, dramatizes information, creates classroom settings where the teacher reveals the way the information has changed his life, encourages student participation instead of spectatorship, talks with students in love and respect for their brains, moving back and forth between vivid gut level anecdotes and abstract concepts, laws, hypotheses, and theory. Few people would take issue with this use of arousal in education. And this is what good teachers have always done.

It is the second, the explorations in arousal, that have changed the educational scene in recent years. Exercises in sensitivity training, encountering, transactional analysis, and self awareness have found their way into classrooms, industrial, church, and government workshops. And it is this direct training in bringing people into touch with their feelings that has caused the greatest criticism of affective education. And I understand this. Many trainers and leaders do not know much about what they are doing. Often they have gone to a marathon or two, have been deeply aroused and converted, and behold! next week they are ordained. That has hurt the movement, for doubtless many persons (some "authorities" say ten percent of those involved) have experienced some degree of psychological shock and injury. Yet the fact that so many thousands of people have turned to these workshops tells us something about the affective starvation of the American people and therefore the need.

Moreover, there are thousands upon thousands of young men and women of intelligence graduating (or dropping) every year from highschool, especially inner-city high schools, who cannot read and write. As the controversial book Pygmalion in the Classroom illustrates (and its underlying studies at Harvard and Chicago universities suggest) the failures in the American

education system fail in large measure because of psychological shock, not of incompetent sensitivity training, but of insensitive and often unconscious relationships between teacher and student. As a student of communication I have ever so gradually come to learn that the nonverbal message about how I feel about myself and the person I talk with is transmitted every time I open my mouth. The most significant thing I learned my first week of public school teaching, I learned in the faculty smoking room. The academic subject of the faculty room was how dumb the students are. These teachers did not know they were projecting their fear that the students might get out of hand. They did not know that the reason they perceived the students as stupid was because they had "turned off" the students, because they did not empathize with the student, because they did not know the affective world of the students. They did not want to know it, lest they learn how much they must change in ways basically repugnant to them.

What we are discussing here has the most serious implication for education at Western. When I first came to Western we were a teacher's college, not attracting in the main the best of students. During the 60's with 2000 more students rapping at our door than we could accommodate we obviously screened out the weakest students. It took a high school C+ to get in, a B or above was more likely. Even then I heard a number of professors say that their main educational responsibility was to get rid of the weakest third of the student body. Now with falling enrollments we are of necessity accepting students of borderline ability. We have hundreds of students again who are "functional illiterates." The most shocking emotional trauma happens in the second half of each semester at Western Michigan University. Directly, related, the most significant finding of operant conditioning research for human education is the clearly demonstrated fact that punishment (unless reward

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reinforces good variations in behavior when they occur) reinforces the very behavior it is intended to extinguish. When students learn to fail they are taught to be failures. I do not rule out the use of punitive affect. I am, however, saying that education <u>build</u> on the affect of fear is the basic cause of alcoholism, crime, and human failure. When the Registrar accepts a student it is the University's responsibility to let him fail only if he must. I am frightened by people who love standards more than they do people. Moreover the hopes that America may retain a democracy in the years ahead, given the world food and energy crises, depends upon the number of citizens who will have been educated humanely. Affective education is taught by every professor in this or any other university, and harmful affective education is shared by those who deny they deal with affect and those who consciously and intentionally make their impact on student feelings. Buddha said "Whatever a hater may do to a hater or an enemy to an enemy, a wrongly directed mind will do us greater mischief."

I have said I think it is regrettable that so many "trainers" are poorly trained. But my greatest distress with the direct education of the emotions, is the rather general adoration in the human potentials movement of the "here and now" emphasis. I am aware that education in America has been aimed rather exclusively at skills, in the lower grades, and at cognitive gymnastics in the high grades, colleges and universities. This, especially in higher education, is an escape from the affect of the "here and now." One can blame this on our Greek heritage, but I am not sure of this charge. I am more sure that the person who learns to generalize from experience is guided by his feelings. His feelings give him the imaging model that gets generalized

into mathematics or verbal symbols. The right brain and the left brain have different functions and they work together. Nobody can operate better than his sense of identity or self-awareness will permit. Only those close to their feelings about themselves as an evolving organism can find their potentials. If the left brain, digital and verbal, dominates the right brain one's conscious logical common sense destroys his capacity to reconceptualize. If ones's right brain dominates, one may image hugely, but he cannot translate the analogy into full maturity by an appropriate stimulation of both cognitive and affective powers.

Kurt Lewin emphasized the view that education is a social process. I would like, in emphasizing the role of arousal in learning, to alter Lewin's perception ever so slightly and say that education is a communicative process. When it is a solo experience there is a conversation within, a kind of telegraphic self-talk between the two brains, the hunches from the right, the exploration of hunches by the left. The two brains are entwined in a relationship which is a feeling toward the process. If the education involves two or more people the communication is entwined in a relationship among persons. All messages ride a carrier wave of feeling which forms the relationship among the persons involved. Robert Bales at Harvard has spent his career studying what people do when they talk and listen.[2] He and his students have isolated twelve categories of communicative acts. By these twelve acts we achieve three communicative purposes, so his more recent studies indicate. We express feelings toward the person, we express feelings toward the

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[1]Robert Oppemsheimer, "Analogy in Science" - American Psychology, 1956, 127-135.

[2]Robert Bales, Interaction Process Analysis; Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1950; Personality and Interpersonal Behavior New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

values of our community, we assert our role in deciding what facts to believe and act upon. In two of the three purposes of communication, if Bales knows the anatomy of interaction, the affect is central in purpose. Thus our feelings about the person we interact with, and our feelings about the community values we share (or do not share) decide for us what the facts and what to do. The research in perception has reached the same conclusion: What we see out there finds its form in the eye of the beholder. As physicists moved from exploration of the world we can see to the world we cannot see, again, the observer has come to be conceived, not as an objective spectator, but as an interactive agent involved in the system being studied. OUr consciousness is a verbal behavior. We have no way, yet, if ever, of getting outside of language in order to analyze. And, if so the physicist, too, is trapped within the questions language will permit him to ask and explore. Some place I read recently that one physicist, thinking this way, has said it is delusion to think we predict; we invent. If so we then control what we invent. We are trapped between a set of feelings and the perceptions verbal language will let us make. Though Einstein helped invent quantum physics he spent the last half of his life trying to disprove the notion that the subatomic world is capricious. He did not like the feelings he experienced when he thought that way. Thus his famous remarks: "God does not play dice with the universe" and the other, "God may be subtle but he is not capricious." All thought begins in some sort of affect.

I would like in closing to focus remarks on the survival of man. Our great danger is that the terrible human urge to beat the other guy, the need to feel superior--I am talking about affect--may set in motion a conflict we cannot control. The focus, when one asks about affect, is the terrible conflict in man and between men. Konrad Lorenz argues that man came into

being 1,000,000 years ago by his skill in flight, not fight.[1] He was, as compared to the more powerful animals, relatively weak. Lorenz reasons that the survival value of aggression rests in interspecie conflict, not intra-specie conflict. But says Lorenz our pre-human and early human experience with poor claws and poor fangs did not teach us the destructive potential of aggression and violence. Thus man came into being with no built in inhibition to this destructive urges. He thus reasons that the salvation of man is dependent upon: 1, his awareness of his destructive tendency and 2, his capacity to build an ethic (or if you like a value system) that in the moment of destructive urge restrains him.

Lorenz's reasoning may or may not be true. But it is entirely compatible with perspectives fascinating to the student of symbols. Man may not be man essentially because he is a sophisticated tool maker. Indeed the stone age takes us back only half way to the beginning. The use of copper scarcely predates the invention of writing. The first iron tools were hammered out about 3500 years ago. The use of steam and the invention of machinery goes back only to the days of our great grandfathers. Almost all the tools we use in our daily lives have been invented in my life time.

But somewhere on the way back to our beginnings, a million years ago man learned to sing, talk, count, sketch, and make an abode to live in. The earliest traces of man's basic character are found in ancient caves, lived and worshipped in by man 20,000 years ago. We find suggestions of burial rites, drawings of animals on the walls with "decorations" that have been deciphered as a calendar built around the phases of the moon. Man is man because he is the sophisticated symbolizer. And his great power that made him into the conflictual affective creature he is was that peculiar power to talk. In the beginning was the word says the scriptures. The significance of that power

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[1]Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression, New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1963.

which Pavlov called the "second signal system" is that it set man aside from his experience to make commentary on experience, to tell of birth and death. By the second signal system he perceives himself as an object fascinated by life and fascinated by death. The Harvard psychologist Henry A. Murray, in a paper with the arresting title, "The Personality and Career of Satan," says that the greatest discovery of our time, evolving out of awareness of the significance of the rituals unique to man, is his awareness of the life-death struggle in man.[1] In short the basic rituals of culture demonstrate that religious beliefs are a projection of the basic character of man. By this analysis of the symbolic structure of man we tally in the end with the conclusions of Konrad Lorenz.

I would suppose values clarification education goes most directly to affective education that may save our hides. I am not suggesting a return to preaching the values of good old time religion. Preaching is based too much on the strategy of overpowering others with words. It is that very urge to overcome others that has us in the bind we are in. Preaching is the wolf in sheep's clothing. Moreover, time is not reversible. It is education that will permit us to feel unconditional acceptance, of each other, that will let us feel the aspirations of the community of man, that will maintain a creative balance between the urge to create and the urge to destroy. There is no conflict resolution for man. Conflict is the essence of the human predicament. There is only management. The central business of education is to evolve people who can manage the conflict deep within and between. Thus managing effectively the emotional side of our experience we may set the stage for the imaging hunches and intellectual exploration of productive living.

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[1] Henry A. Murray, "The Personality and Career of Satan," Journal of Social Issues, 18:1962, 36-54.

IN SUM

The education of the emotions is a dangerous business in which all teachers are involved, whether they know it or not. Given the conflictual character of man and the precarious state of life on earth the most important thing all teachers need to know more about is the character of human emotions.